

## CT DPH Annual Progress Report- Activity Summary

### Lead Testing in School and Child Care Program

#### Drinking Water Grant Section 2107

October 1, 2019- September 30, 2020

The State of Connecticut Department of Public Health (CT DPH) is committed to addressing lead in drinking water in our schools and childcare facilities, and overall reduction of childhood lead exposure across our state. During this review period, there were unforeseen events that greatly impacted the progression of our grant workplan. The COVID-19 pandemic severely affected the State of Connecticut starting in mid-March, leading to Governor Lamont declaring a Public Health Emergency. This led to an abrupt change in our work environment, and to keep staff safe and healthy, staff were required to work remotely until further notice. This, along with subsequent affects across the State, has caused significant delay in the implementation of the lead testing in schools and childcare program. Despite the delay, the CT DPH is determined to fully utilize the grant funding it has applied for and been awarded. The CT DPH intends on requesting an extension for the use of funds and will amend the workplan to reflect a revised timeline and implementation strategy.

#### Federal Fiscal Year 2020 Activity Summary-

- A Mass Spectrometer for Drinking Water Metals Analysis was purchased and installed in the first quarter of 2020 for the labs in order to assist with the results analysis when sampling can proceed.
- Prior to COVID, the implementation and development of the WIIN grant involved the use of the DWS staff. However, due to pandemic responses, multiple aspects of the development for a sampling plan have been impacted. Upon reexamination of the prior course of action, it was found that the use of our current staff was no longer as reliable because of their involvement with the COVID response. The plan was further changed for the course of the 2020 year, as schools were no longer allowing outside entities to enter while others have closed for the duration of the calendar year. This has impacted our time frame for sampling and has been delayed until the school spring semester of 2021 at the earliest, dependent on changing conditions in the pandemic.
- After significant delay in the hiring process, the Environmental Analyst (EA) I was brought on staff on July 31, 2020. During this time period, the Environmental Analyst has been researching the 49 other states and their success for developing a sampling plan in schools. These efforts have also been coupled with an examination of states and their responses to COVID. Discussions with these states have also indicated future issues that may arise and their responses, so that we may avoid these future problems.
- The EA has been in contact with a few states that have robust and active sampling plans in order to gauge their process. This information is helpful as we change course and try to develop a fundamentally sound course of action during these changing times. Discussion with other states has indicated the need to involve outside project partners due to the scale of effort required. In addition, the use of outside partners may be more beneficial during this period of pandemic as it may cut down on exposure risks when schools reopen. The EA is currently examining all potential outside partners and their potential working relationship for the grant. The EA is also examining the needs for potential public communications, database for sample collection, and responsibilities within each potential group while adhering to the principles of EPA's 3Ts guidance. The EA has also been examining what may be required in order to maintain a volunteering population for continued testing and what future needs may be addressed after sampling has been completed.
- COVID has hindered the process of hiring, sampling, and planning that were originally envisioned. However, the hiring of the EA has allowed for the necessary research, communication, and shift in planning that is necessary during this pandemic. While sampling may not be ongoing, the timing has permitted for a more firm planning process to take place.